UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.237/36
29 July 1993

Original: ENGLISH

INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE
FOR A FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
Eighth session
Geneva, 16-27 August 1993
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda

MATTERS RELATING TO COMMITMENTS

FIRST REVIEW OF THE INFORMATION COMMUNICATED BY EACH PARTY INCLUDED IN ANNEX I TO THE CONVENTION

Note by the secretariat*

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 8	3
A. Committee mandate	1	3
B. Scope of the note	2 - 6	3
C. Possible action by the Committee	7 - 8	4

*The following sections of this note will be issued in an addendum:
III. Information communicated by Annex I Parties
IV. Information on the global situation
V. First reviews by the Conference of the Parties

GE.93-61873

	Paragraphs	Page
II. OUTLINE OF THE COMMUNICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS AT THE FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES	9 - 18	5
A. Convention provisions	9 - 12	5
B. Scenario	13 - 18	5

Annexes

I. Diagram of the communication and review process at COP I	7
II. List of possible common elements to be addressed in communications by Annex I Parties	8

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Committee mandate

1. The work plan adopted by the Committee at its sixth session includes task A.3, "First review of the information communicated by each Party included in Annex I of the Convention" (A/AC.237/24, para. 44). This task was assigned to Working Group I. The Committee decided that Working Group I would take up this task at its eighth session. The Committee also decided (A/AC.237/31, para. 49) that, in the discussion on this item, consideration should be given to:

(a) Formats and contents of communications;
(b) Methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of measures;
(c) Compilation and synthesis of information in communications for purposes of aggregation, assessment of overall effects and report on implementation.

The Committee further decided that in dealing with these matters, Working Group I would consider, as appropriate, the roles of the subsidiary bodies established by the Convention (A/AC.237/31, para. 50).

B. Scope of the note

2. The review of information relating to implementation that is communicated by Parties is one of the keys to the effectiveness of the Convention. The various processes of communication, consideration and review stipulated in the Convention are intertwined and may best be considered as a whole, indeed as a common -- though differentiated -- process involving different categories of Parties in different ways. Moreover, the different types of review to be carried out by the Conference of the Parties at its first session (COP I) -- notably the review of information communicated by Annex I Parties (task A.3) and the review of the adequacy of certain commitments by these Parties (task A.4) -- are difficult to disentangle in practice. Consequently, the secretariat felt that it could best serve the needs of the Committee in starting its work on task A.3 by preparing a background note that would encompass several aspects of the comprehensive communication and review process that are relevant to the action to be taken by COP I. 1/

3. The resulting note is a first effort by the secretariat to pull together the many ramifications of the Convention dealing with the communication and review process. It offers some preliminary thoughts on the subject, that would benefit from careful examination and comment in the Committee. Within an overall scenario for a comprehensive communication and review process for COP I, the note distinguishes between two main flows of information: that resulting from the communications of Annex I Parties and that required to determine the global situation against which the adequacy of those Parties' commitments to limit emissions of greenhouse gases may be assessed. The note advances suggestions and questions for consideration by the Committee with respect to the nature of the information required, the methodologies needed for its compilation, analysis and evaluation, and the way it is to be handled once it is received, as well as with respect to the reviews called for by the Convention.

4. Some considerations advanced in this note are of general relevance to the communication and review process as it evolves beyond COP I. An important stage in that evolution will be the inclusion of communications from developing country Parties, in accordance with Article 12.5. The design of the review process will have to be adapted to this evolution. Elements of this note may also be of relevance to the preparation and submission of national communications by signatories to the Convention, on a voluntary basis, in response to the invitation contained in General Assembly resolution 47/195, paragraph 4. 2/ However, in view of the orientation given by task A.3, neither the future adaptation of the review process nor the possible contribution thereto of voluntary communications is addressed in this note.

5. This note is to be read in conjunction with that on the roles of the two subsidiary bodies in relation to the review of information under the Convention (A/AC.237/33). Two further notes, one on inventory methodologies (A/AC.237/34) and the other on criteria for joint implementation (A/AC.237/35), submitted under the same overall agenda item, also deal with matters of relevance to the communication and review process.

6. With respect to the roles of the subsidiary bodies, it may be observed that the effective review of information by the COP will depend largely on their contributions. The assignment of tasks to them and the definition of their interrelationships are important facets of the design of the communication and review process. A related question is what substantive and other inputs to the process will be required from the interim secretariat and later from the Convention secretariat. These matters have resource implications, the former for the calendar of intergovernmental meetings and participation therein, and the latter for secretariat capacities and budgets. Early guidance from the Committee would help to secure the necessary resources in time.

C. Possible action by the Committee

7. The Committee may wish to review issues arising from the Convention provisions for the first review of information communicated by Annex I Parties, bearing in mind the related questions raised in this note and in documents A/AC.237/33, 34 and 35. Among these issues, some appear to warrant priority attention on account of the time factors involved. Foremost is the desirability of agreeing on preliminary guidelines for the use of Annex I Parties in preparing their first communications for review by COP I. If the Convention enters into force early in 1994, these communications will have to be made in the second half of that year. Such guidelines may cover, inter alia, formats and contents of communications, methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of measures, and practical aspects of communicating and processing information. Another priority would be to agree on matters that have resource implications, as indicated in the preceding paragraph.

8. The Committee may also wish to make provision for further work under this sub-item at its ninth session and to give indications of any additional work that may be required of the secretariat in preparation for that session.

II. OUTLINE OF THE COMMUNICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS AT THE FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

A. Convention provisions

9. The Convention envisages a dynamic review process, based on assessments of the implementation of the Convention and of the global situation, drawing upon scientific, technical, economic and other information. This process is to serve as the basis for decisions by the COP and by individual Parties. It will permit national and global responses to climate change to develop in an evolutionary way under the Convention, based upon the best available information. In addition, it can be expected that published information resulting from the process will influence the perceptions and actions of States that are considering ratification or accession, as well as international and other organizations, and the public at large.

10. Article 12 lays down specific provisions on the communication of information related to implementation; this information will provide the basis for the assessment of implementation. Several other articles refer to the need for such information and its communication. Examples can be found in Articles 4.1, 4.2, 7.2, 8.2, 9 and 10.

11. Article 12.5 establishes a calendar for Parties to provide their initial communications. Each Party included in Annex I to the Convention shall provide this communication within six months after the entry into force of the Convention for that Party; in other words, in time for review by COP I. Each Party not so listed shall make its initial communication within three years of the entry into force of the Convention for that Party. Parties that are least developed countries may make their initial communication at their discretion. In the latter two cases, the Parties included in Annex II are to provide the resources to meet the agreed full costs of such communications. In neither case are the developing country Parties required to communicate information to COP I.

12. According to Article 12.8, any group of Parties may, subject to guidelines to be adopted by the COP, and to prior notification to the COP, make a joint communication in fulfilment of their obligations under Article 12. Such a communication should include information on the fulfilment by each of these Parties of its individual obligations under the Convention.

B. Scenario

13. The following is one possible scenario of the communication and review process at COP I. The aim in outlining this is not to propose a definitive design for the process but to help the Committee start its discussion on this matter.

14. The communication and review process at COP I will comprise two flows of information which feed two reviews. Both information flows and both reviews are closely related and the process will give rise to frequent interactions. Annex I to this note attempts to illustrate the process schematically. In order to keep the picture simple, most feedbacks are not shown.

15. One flow of information is limited to national sources: the communications by Annex I Parties. A list of possible common elements for these communications is suggested in annex II to this note. The second flow is fed from a variety of sources that can supply elements of the global picture, against which national efforts are to be assessed. Each flow of information will have to be "processed", that is, compiled, analysed and synthesized, so as to be usable by the COP in undertaking its reviews. The respective roles of the subsidiary bodies in this "processing" phase will need to be defined, as will the technical inputs of the interim secretariat.

16. One of the reviews, that of the implementation of commitments by Annex I Parties and of the aggregate effects of measures taken by them, will be based on the flow of information communicated by those Parties. The other, the review of the adequacy of Article 4.2(a) and (b), will have to juxtapose the assessment of aggregate effects of actions by those Parties and the latest information about climate change and its impacts. The former review will address the question: How are Annex I Parties fulfilling their commitments and what is the overall effect? The latter review will ask, in the context of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities guiding action by all Parties under the Convention: Is the aggregate result of the efforts of the Annex I Parties commensurate with the scale of the global problem? If the answer to this question is negative, the conclusion of the COP might be that more needs to be done to fulfil existing commitments, or that commitments need to be strengthened, or both. The COP will then have to determine what action is needed to maintain the momentum towards the objective of the Convention.

17. A synthesis of the compilation of both types of information, of the outcomes of both reviews and of the resulting action by the COP, will then be communicated to the world at large in a report on implementation. According to Article 7.2(f), the COP is to consider and adopt such reports regularly and ensure their publication. These reports will be a medium of accountability by the Parties to the global community, in response to whose "common concern" they have undertaken to be guided by the need "to protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind" (see Preamble and Article 3.1).

18. The above scenario is developed in subsequent sections of this note. In order to gain time in issuing this document, those sections will be contained in a later addendum.

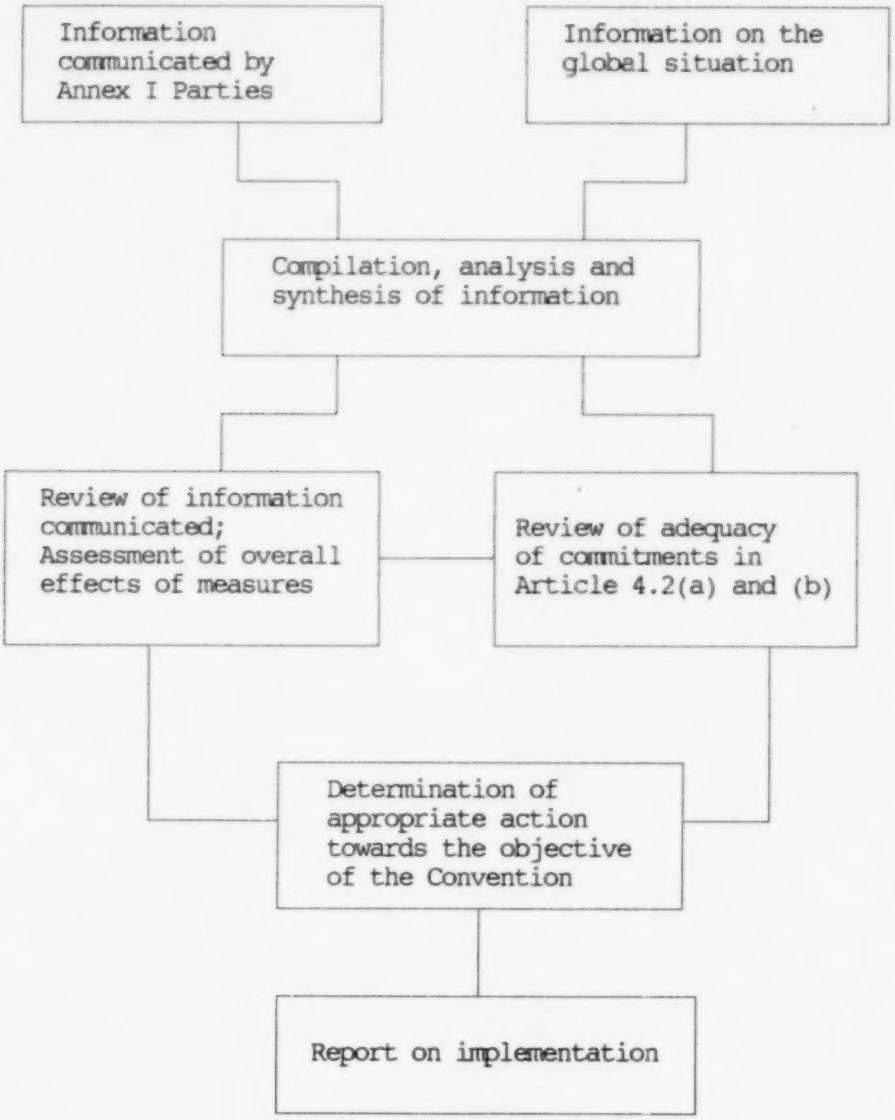
Notes

1/ The Convention uses several terms in relation to the treatment of information communicated by Parties: "review", "assessment", "consideration". For the sake of simplicity, this note uses the single term "review" to cover all of these, without prejudice to the actual wording of the Convention.

2/ Such communications have been received from Australia, Cuba, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United States of America (see A/AC.237/INF.12 and Add.1).

Annex I

DIAGRAM OF THE COMMUNICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS AT COP I


Information communicated by Annex I Parties
Information on the global situation
Compilation, analysis and synthesis of information
Review of information communicated; Assessment of overall effects of measures
Review of adequacy of commitments in Article 4.2(a) and (b)
Determination of appropriate action towards the objective of the Convention
Report on implementation

Annex II

LIST OF POSSIBLE COMMON ELEMENTS TO BE ADDRESSED IN COMMUNICATIONS BY ANNEX I PARTIES

A. National data, including a national inventory of emissions and removals of greenhouse gases*

B. Assessments of vulnerability and adaptation measures*

C. Detailed description of mitigation policies and measures, possibly including cost/benefit assessments, and specific estimates of resulting projected levels of emissions and removals*

D. Joint implementation activities

E. Provision of new and additional financial resources and fulfilment of other commitments relating to finance and transfer of technology (Annex II Parties only)

F. Programmes and policies on research, systematic observation, education, training and public awareness

G. Other relevant information, for example, information on international financial and technical cooperation, including cooperation for the implementation of Agenda 21

- - - - -

*Methodologies used should be described.